



Lessons Learned Record of Interview

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LL-01				
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LL-01 (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C)				
Date/Time:				
April 2, 2015, 11:30am-1:00pm				
Location:				
L'Enfant Plaza, Washington, DC				
Purpose:				
To gain perspective on NSC strategy and planning processes on Afghanistan				
Present				
Candace Rondeaux				
SIGAR Attendees:				
N/A				
Non-attribution Basis:	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No - conducted on background; agreed to be referenced as (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C)
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Key Topics:				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NSC organizational processes • Strategic assessment and review • Resource review for strategy 				

RE: COIN as strategy

In a counterinsurgency environment, the time imperative is very different than the development time imperative and that mismatch between imperatives shapes decision-making. With COIN aid development strategy is seen in a military context. If you are in a COIN environment and you want the local population to get the connection between the aid delivered to the government and the service the government is supposed to provide you have to advertise it as such. In a development environment it might be appropriate to explicitly make that connection and it might not be appropriate. It depends on the political circumstances.



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There was always a question about the value of associating assistance with the international effort or the government. Should we adopt the take it for granted approach with how government is associated with assistance? That might be fine in a development context but in counterinsurgency the goal is to connect government with delivery of service. So then the question became: should the bee keeping operation have a USAID logo slapped on it, or a NATO logo or an MRRD logo slapped on it.

The problem with the COIN imperative was that had to be successful because of the personalities who were advocating it. Counterinsurgency always had to be successful and therefore was always being redefined to meet the description of success.

Even if you know better--at the end of the day you're in a warzone. You have a commander and your job is to follow orders and get behind the strategy. So you have this patchwork of provinces where the metrics are red, yellow, green. When I was in Kapisa I'd be sitting in a province that by comparison to Kandahar was green all the time, but actually within the province the metrics are mixed you've got patches of yellow over here and patches of green in other places.

RE: Sustainability and metrics

To have no opium grown one year is not a metric of success. If everyone has just shifted to the production of another drug, that is not a measure of success. The metrics were always problematic. The metrics are really a sign of the American obsession with the idea that quantitative measures tell us everything we need to know. People are always looking at metrics, but the reality is that a lot of the stuff that isn't measurable is the stuff that's going to achieve long term sustainability.

RE: NSC strategy development and implementation

We did a very good job of pushing information from the field up to the principals. Where we fell short is pushing decisions back down to the field. I'll always remember reading Woodward's book [Obama's War] when I got back to Washington after being out at the PRT and turning to the back of the book where there was a copy of the strategy, and slapping my forehead, saying "Oh, that was the strategy?!"

(b)(5)



RE: Corruption

No one was kidding themselves about corruption. It was a question of what do you do about it. We knew that this governor or that governor was corrupt but the military insisted that we had to work with them. So the question is not about whether anyone addressed the corruption issue or whether anyone was aware that corruption could be a problem for the strategy overall in the early days. It was a question about at what point did the military begin to acknowledge that corruption might be a problem.

In the beginning, the military kept saying that corruption was an unfortunate short-term side effect then toward the end the feeling was 'Oh, my God, this could derail the whole thing. With H.R.



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McMaster and Shafifiyat and other similar efforts it was like they just discovered something new about the pernicious effects of corruption. People in the field would be moaning and groaning over the compromises made by the military on working with corrupt actors but they would be shut down. The reality was that criminal patronage networks were there all along and network mapping should have been integrated into the effort from the start. But until it occurred to them [the military] corruption didn't exist. The issue was not that nobody else got it. The issue was that the military decided it was a problem but it was too late then to do anything about it.

You would read these strategy papers and briefings and they would say 'the risk with corruption is poor governance.' But the reality is that poor governance is not a 'risk' it's a fact. It has to be built into the creation of the plan from the start.

A counterinsurgency strategy has to be created from the bottom-up. Corruption and poor governance were givens so build a counterinsurgency strategy that acknowledges those realities. With the way COIN was framed in the COIN field manual it was like it was a laboratory and now we're going to roll it out and see what happens.

RE: NSC process under Lute

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[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

RE: Civilian shortfall/surge

The problem was not that there were insufficient numbers of civilians who want to do this [go out to the field]. It's that the structures and funding were not there at State to support that. State resisted the idea of drafting people to go out the field because they didn't have the funding to make it happen.

The other issue was that State wasn't sure what to do about the stabilization piece. With CSO if State were really serious about it they would put that right in the heart of the state building that was going on in Iraq and Afghanistan at the time.



SIGAR

Office of the Special Inspector General
for Afghanistan Reconstruction

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RE: NSC decision making

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[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]